

4 A COURIER OF FORTUNE

"But we must wait till I have proofs. When the news of this governor's evil doings came to my father's ears he sent me to learn the truth; and while bidding me act as I would, enjoined me to do nothing until I had clear proofs. A Bourbon does not act on mere rumours."

"Proofs!" broke in Pascal with a swift change to earnestness. "In the devil's name, what better proof of the man's deeds could you find than that which is writ large on the wretched, starving faces of the people? Look at them—faces that the devil grins to see when he would tempt men and women to sin."

"I came in during the night only, and have seen little or nothing yet," said Gerard. "What is the meaning of this gathering?"

"This devil spawn of a governor has a new ordinance to proclaim, a new tyranny to enact," said Pascal. "He will tax afresh to half its value every ounce of foodstuff that comes into the city. As if the poor wretches were not already half-starving. And this tax will finish them. Look at them and say if the Governor is not justly dubbed the Tiger of Morvaix? They are waiting his coming now with the heralds. Of a truth I would as lief dwell in hell as in Morvaix under Bourbon sway though it be in name, and Bourbon as I am to the core."

"We have had other and weightier matters to occupy us than the troubles of a small province so remote," said Gerard, with a frown at Pascal's words. "But if the tale of wrongs be warranted, the Governor, Duke de Rochelle though he be, will answer to me for them."

"By all reports he will answer to no man but himself."

"Enough, Pascal," said Gerard, with a wave of the hand. "There appear to be over many soldiers, Dubois."

"And report says theirs are the only mouths that take enough food," broke in Pascal. "Your fighting man must be fed, of course; but when it comes to feed-